

The Grape store

In 2021 an old shed was restored at Northfield allotments, with thanks to the plot holders for allowing it to be restored.

The shed has been rebuilt by Simon Coleman, keeping its original shape and feel.

This old shed was crammed with fruit boxes. The boxes were probably used to store vegetables or fruit on the plot. The large grape vine on the plot where the shed was built may hint at the fruit the boxes stored in summers past on our historic allotment.

The restoration of the store was carried out in March 2021. The images below were taken in late 2020 and early 2021 and show the shed in poor condition.





Structure: The structure leant backwards, which may have been caused by the weight of the metal roof.

Door: The door was not attached and can be seen leaning against at the side of the shed. The four panelled door details were hidden by various pieces of wood used to strengthen it by a previous plot holder. This additional wood was very rotten and had added to the level of fungus attacking the door. The wood worm and rot had created a habitat for worms, woodlice and slugs. When the door was rebuilt, around 40 percent of the wood was too rotten to reuse.

Inside: The interior was completely filled with boxes. This was the main feature which drew me to carry out the restoration. I would see it from Northfield avenue as I walked past. The contents of the store consisted of around 50 grape boxes from Italy. The majority of the boxes were from Capolongo srl. Stornara, Napoli, Italy. The industrial grape boxes had clearly provided a comfortable home for mice in the past; one box contained chewed newspaper dated 1987. I believe this shed had been rebuilt at various times. I found flat metal sheeting inside the shed that was covered with a bitumen paint that may have been its original exterior finish. I kept some of the rusted metal sheeting. The shed sat on the bare soil, which had led to some serious rot on the lower section. I added a new reclaimed brick floor. At the front of the shed there was an area of red bricks which would have reduced plants growing in front of the door. These bricks were cleaned and re-laid in the front of the shed. I was keen to keep the original size which was 3ft x 3 1/2ft square with a height of 5ft at the rear and 6ft at the front. The majority of the frame was too rotten to be used, so reclaimed 4x2 inch roof beams were used for the frame. The roof was created with two sheets of corrugated metal, one original piece was reused while another was replaced with an old piece a sheeting with the same profile found on the allotment. The back panel was rebuilt using reclaimed corrugated sheeting, although it had wooden boarding at some point before. The sides were clad in reclaimed wooden boards from a deconstructed shed on the allotment.

Door: The front door was a great surprise to me, although it had been covered with various pieces of wood that disguised its beauty. The door was particularly rotten and the bottom 2ft was missing, and really only the top section and the latch stile were reusable. I was able to get a reclaimed Edwardian door and completely rebuilt this door. The image below shows some new lower sections added to the original upper sections. The new door sections were repainted on the outside to match the original paint.

Ironwork: The top hasp was kept on the door. A new pair of reclaimed hinges were used to replace ones which were not particularly old. I added a door latch made from metal from the allotment and a rather interesting barrel bolt made from a brass barrel and metal pin found on the allotment. I also added a few items inside which I have collected during my time on the allotment.





Above left: the front door being rebuilt, Above right the shed rebuilt



Above: the completed Grape store with rebuilt door, Inside you can see the grape boxes and some vintage items. You can see this and other heritage features during our summer open day.

